

**Testimony to the Public Health Committee
Senate Bill 421 – March 12, 2008**

My name is Wallie Jahn – resident of New Milford, Ct.

I am here today testifying in support of Senate Bill 421, An Act Prohibiting The Possession Of Tobacco By Minors.

I contacted Senator Andrew Roraback two years ago requesting that a law is passed in this state to prohibit kids under the age of 18 to smoke.

The health risks of tobacco are well known, yet the rates of smoking and the use of chewing tobacco continue to grow. Many people are picking up these habits when they are young - in fact, 90% of all adult smokers started when they were kids. And each day, more than 4,000 kids become regular smokers. In Ct. that number is 5,400 a year. Currently, 18% of high school students smoke in Connecticut.

There are 4,900 adult deaths a year in Ct. from smoking.

76,000 kids under the age of 18 who are currently smoking will ultimately die prematurely.

Connecticut spends \$1.63 billion a year on health care costs directly relating to smoking.

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Our state and federal government will remove potentially contaminated food products off store shelves if just a couple of people are reported sick or die.

This holiday season, toys were removed from stores due to the possible contamination from lead paint.

I applaud all these actions to help protect children and our citizens.

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As you all know, we are currently in a health crisis with our kids due to inactivity, resulting in obesity and a serious increase in diabetes in teenagers.

For our state to allow children to smoke is irresponsible. These kids and young teenagers have no idea of the long term health consequences they will be confronted with in their adult life.

Peer pressure will continue to attract these kids every day.

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Legislation is now being discussed that would restrict an adult from smoking in a car with a child occupant. If and when that law is passed, that child could then leave the car and light up a cigarette. You must agree that this does not make sense.

It is a know fact that athletes make the honor role more often. A child that takes up smoking is less likely to play sports, to exercise and ultimately, may not perform as well in school.

You all know it is bad for a 10 or 12 year old to smoke. Please do the right thing today and support this bill. You will protect thousands of kids every day.